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ABSTRACT

The guide, intended to complement developed curricula for parents, professionals, and consumers concerning access and use of assistive technology, focuses on appropriate technology for young children with disabilities. A question and answer format is used to address: terms used in the guide, service considerations (e.g., the role of evaluation in determining early intervention needs); selection of technology including personal and technology factors, funding for technology, parent and child rights, advocacy for technology, funding sources, and advocacy contacts in Arkansas. Sample questions posed include: Why is the evaluation process important for technology? What technology is best for the young child? How much will the technology really cost? What happens when the device breaks? Who pays for the technology a young child needs? What is advocacy? Is it important to keep records about activities done to help the child get needed technology? Each section is concluded with a summary of key points. Also provided is a checklist of questions to ask about technology and a checklist for advocacy activities. (DB)

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Assistive Technology Guide

for Young Children with Disabilities

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Partnerships in Planning for State Technology Service Delivery

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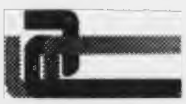

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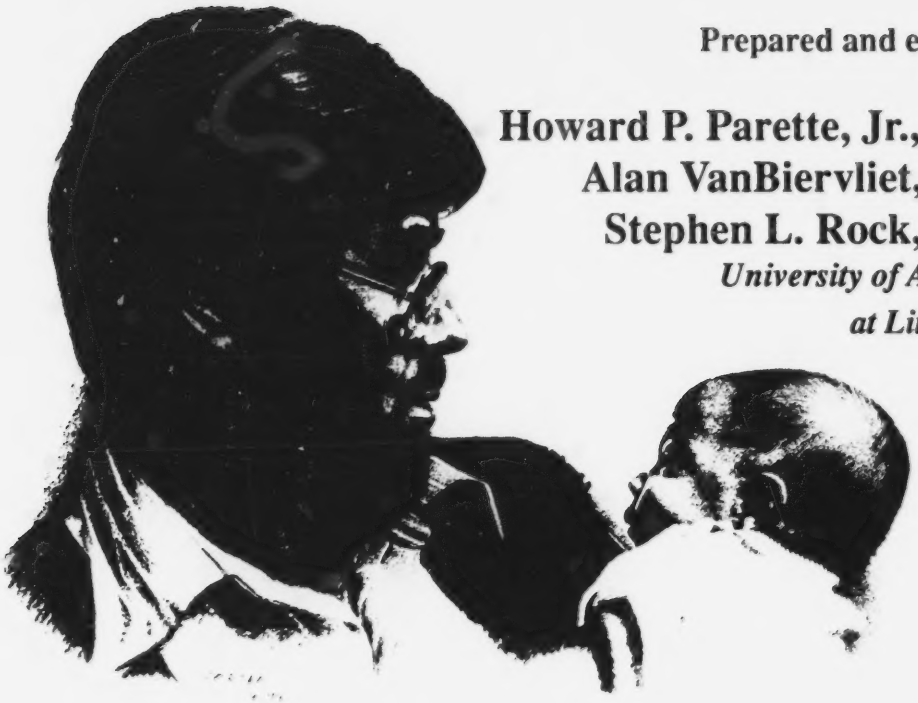

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Think people...
Think technology!

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Acknowledgements

This Guide is a response to the shared vision of thousands of persons with disabilities of all ages, parents, and professionals in Arkansas--that technology *should be provided to young children* who can benefit from the many important prosthetic and compensatory tools currently available in our society.

In developing the Guide, a particular note of appreciation is expressed to the numerous individuals who participated in the Technology Access for Arkansans (TAARK) project, a multiagency, collaborative state planning activity which laid the foundation for the development of the Arkansas Technology Access Program (ARTAP). Through TAARK, four technology curricula have been developed which will make an important impact upon the quality of technology services provided in Arkansas. Hopefully these curricula will serve as models for other states attempting to develop comprehensive, consumer-responsive systems of technology service delivery. This Guide will complement the aforementioned curricula, and, in so doing, increase the level of awareness and effectiveness of parents and professionals in Arkansas who share in common the welfare of the youngest citizens of the state.

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A Window of Change...

The window through which we presently view the world shows many changes. Young children are growing up in a rapidly changing world that is influenced by technology. For young children with disabilities, the promise of this technology offers great hope--a window to the future. With the assistance of certain devices and equipment, even the youngest children can move more successfully in the world about them, communicate their needs to other people, and make choices about things they do and do not like. These devices and equipment, often referred to as "assistive technology" can change the lives of young children with disabilities and federal laws recognize the importance of assistive technology.

Often parents and professionals working with young children with disabilities are unable to see through the window of change being shaped by technological changes. They may be unaware of assistive devices and equipment to help meet the needs of young children with disabilities. When this happens, children don't receive the technology they need, and their window to the future is dimmed. The following are some examples of how parents and professionals who were aware of the promise of technology have used devices to meet the needs of young children with disabilities.

John is a 4-year-old with cerebral palsy who lives in Southern Arkansas. One year ago he was unable to walk, talk, or feed himself. However, using special technology designed to meet his special needs, he is now able to get around using a special powered wheelchair which he controls using a switch mounted on the armrest of the chair. Though he is unable to talk, he is learning to use a speech device which talks using a child's voice. He can express entire sentences by touching a few panels on the device with a stick held in his mouth. A speech pathologist is helping him to use an electronic feeding device which allows him to select foods and to eat and drink at his own pace with little assistance from an adult.

Sandra is 2-year-old child who is mentally retarded. Until this past year, her family who lives in Central Arkansas felt that she was incapable of letting her likes for things in the world about her be known. Recently professionals have designed a special computer system for her which she can use to make choices for things during playtime. She uses her hand to swipe at a ribbon attached to a special switch to have a clown appear on a computer screen and talk to her. She can also kick a switch with her foot to make a toy next to her bang a drum. Her parents and the professionals working with her are hoping that these types of technologies may be used to help Sandra control many things in her environment in the months ahead.

Jeffrey is a 5-year-old child living in Northwest Arkansas who has severe disabilities resulting from an automobile accident when he was an infant. Following the accident, his parents were told that he would never be able to do anything for himself. He cannot talk and is unable to move any part of his body other than his head. However, using special technology Jeffrey can point to pictures on a special computer keyboard using a light device mounted to a headband that he wears. Once he points to a picture, the computer pronounces words and sentences for him, allowing him to talk to others. Jeffrey also uses a special wheelchair which he controls by pressing a switch with his chin. He is even letting his parents know when he needs to go to the bathroom by wearing a special device that beeps when bladder is full.

In each of the above cases, technology has been used to help young children with disabilities have more control over the world in which they live, to make choices, and to live more satisfying lives. This Guide is designed for parents of young children with disabilities and professionals and suggests ways to work with schools and other agencies to provide technology. It is intended to be an *introduction* to the process of obtaining technology and discusses complex issues in a general manner. This means that other professionals having special knowledge of technology should always be involved in helping to get needed technology for a particular child.

Terms Used in the Guide

"What is assistive technology?"

For this Guide, assistive technology is any device which can improve the quality of life for young children ages 0-5 years who have disabilities. Assistive technology can be anything purchasedoff the shelf, modified, or commercially available. It covers the entire range of devices and equipment from adapted spoons for feeding to wheelchairs and computer systems that control living environments.

"What are assistive technology services?"

An assistive technology service is anything to help a young child with a disability or their family obtain, use, and keep a particular device. Persons who sell, maintain, and repair devices and equipment provide services. People who train young children with disabilities and their families in the use and upkeep of technology also provide important services.

"What are early intervention services?"

Assistive technology and assistive technology services provided to children ages 0-2 years will be referred to as "early intervention services". These services are both child- and family-centered in nature and may be provided in a variety of settings which are home-based, center-based, or a combination of both settings.

"What are preschool special education services?"

Assistive technology and assistive technology services provided to children ages 3-5 years will be referred to as "preschool special education services". These services are child-centered in nature and must be provided by the public schools in Arkansas to all young children needing these services beginning in 1991.

Service Considerations

"What is the role of professionals in early intervention and preschool special education settings in getting technology for young children?"

Professionals in early intervention and preschool special education settings should work to obtain any technology needed to help children meet their needs. The public schools are responsible for providing young children ages 3-5 years who have disabilities with a "free and appropriate public education" starting in 1991. This education must be provided in *the least restrictive environment*. This is required by several state and federal laws. Information about these laws can be found in the *Funding Sources* section (pp. 35-43). The school's responsibilities under these laws are to give evaluations, to help young children learn by looking at their special needs,

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to allow them to do the same kinds of things other students do in the school, and to provide technology they need to learn.

For children ages 0-2 years, a number of other agencies and organizations may be providing specific early intervention services to children and families to meet their special needs. These include audiology, speech pathology, occupational therapy, physical therapy and other needed services.

"What is the purpose of evaluations?"

Under state and federal laws, each young child aged 0-5 years with a disability must be provided with an in-depth evaluation of what he or she can and cannot do. This evaluation reflects what the child does in the home, in the world around them, as well as in the early intervention or school setting. Families of children less than 2 years of age must also be evaluated to determine their strengths and needs. Evaluations are usually done through parent interviews and a series of tests and examinations that may include testing by the teacher, occupational therapist, physical therapist, and speech pathologist. They may also involve psychologists, doctors, and other professionals.

"Why is the evaluation process important for technology?"

The evaluation is important in helping select technology to help a young child with a disability. The results of the evaluation help to identify what are the child's needs, what technologies can assist in meeting those needs, and justify the purchase of the technology. For example, an audiologist may see the child and recommend a hearing aid for the child. A speech pathologist may suggest a communication aid be provided. A doctor may prescribe a special wheelchair. In each of these cases, a recommendation was made about technology that would help the child.

Parents should remember that test information about the child is not the only important evaluation information. Teachers and other professionals can't see what

happens in the home setting and other settings outside the school. Information about strengths in these specific areas of the young child's life is important. Persons designing early intervention programs can also use this information in deciding which technology will best meet the child's special needs.

"Why are the IFSP and IEP important to receive technology?"

Every young child between the ages 0 and 2 years who receives early intervention services in Arkansas must have an individualized family service plan (IFSP). The IFSP lists in detail all *early intervention services* necessary to meet the needs of the family *and* the child. These services can include occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, audiology, and other technology-related services. Parents and professionals must ask the question, *"Is there some technology that will assist the child to meet the early intervention goals targeted in the IFSP?* In the area of occupational therapy, for example, a wide range of technologies might be provided. Generally, any device which enables the adaptation of the environment or promotes the learning of skills might be identified as needed for occupational therapy services. The IFSP also identifies who will be responsible for providing *each* early intervention service for the young child and his or her family. During the evaluation, a case manager for the IFSP will be identified. One of the responsibilities of the case manger is to help the family obtain needed technology.

Each child aged 3-5 years who is eligible for preschool special education services must have an individualized education program (IEP). The IEP is a written plan between the school and the child and his or her parents. The child may also participate when he or she is willing and able. An IEP can call for use of a particular technology if it is needed for the student's education. IEPs specifically state how often and how long the student must receive educational services.

The IEP also states how often and how long *related services* are needed for the

student. Related services are those special services such as occupational or physical therapy, audiology, medical and counseling services to be provided by the school. The federal law states related services can be *any services needed to help a student with a disability to benefit from special education.* Since technology can help students benefit from special education, it is often seen as a related service for students with disabilities.

When working through the IEP process with school personnel, parents should remember technology will only be provided by the school as a related service if it is needed for the student to benefit from special education. During the development of the IEP, questions such as *"Is there some technology that can help my son/daughter to meet their school goals"* must be asked.

"If a young child doesn't need early intervention or preschool special education services but has a disability, what technology services must be provided?"

Both federal and state laws call for schools to provide school-age children with disabilities who are 3 to 5 years of age with a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. This means that children not only be allowed to participate in school activities, physical education, health, and transportation services, but that they have *an equal opportunity to participate.* In each of these areas, technology may be used to help the student to have an equal opportunity to participate. Technologies such as hearing aids, print enlargers, and wheelchairs allow students with disabilities to participate in school activities.

"What if the family is told that the child cannot take their technology home ?"

Sometimes devices are used only at the early intervention program or the school, and the young child is not allowed to take them home. Justifying the use of technology in the home will be less of a problem for children receiving early

intervention services where the focus is upon the child and the family. In preschool special education settings it may be more difficult to justify the technology since the focus is on meeting educational goals. Parents and professionals must be able to show how the use of the technology at home allows the student the same opportunity to participate in activities as other children who do not have disabilities. For example, a language device used to talk to other children can be used to help the child communicate his or her needs to the parents. It can also be used for the child to gain experience in using language with others. As another example, a device used at the early intervention program or at school to help the child in feeding at lunchtime would also help at home. Parents and professionals can show that if the child practices using the device at home, less time would be needed by professionals to help the child to learn to use the device during mealtime. In each case, the use of the technology at home can be shown to help the child's early intervention or preschool special education program.

"Should early intervention programs and schools make changes to buildings?"

Under the federal law, many early intervention programs and schools are also required to provide access by making changes in the buildings and grounds. This includes putting in ramps and graded curbs on sidewalks, and widening stalls in bathrooms but the law does not call for the early intervention program or school to tear down and rebuild existing structures for children with disabilities. For instance, a school would not be required to put an elevator in a 3-story building for a preschool child in a wheelchair if no preschool classrooms are on the 3rd floor. However, if recreational activities for all students are on the 3rd floor, the school *would* be required to make those activities available. The school might put all the recreational facilities on the bottom floor of the building, allowing the child to participate in those activities, or they could build an elevator or lift to allow the child with a disability access to the facilities on the 3rd floor. The right to participate is present in either case, whether

changes in modifications or rescheduling are used to give the child the chance to participate in the same recreational activities as other children.

"Can the IFSP or IEP be changed so the student can get new technology?"

The IFSP must be reviewed at least every six months and the IEP must be reviewed at least annually. In both cases, new goals should be set for children as needed by the committee. Parents may request a review at any time. This allows the opportunity for the child to get needed technology to enable the child to benefit from early intervention.

Key Points

- **Technology can help young children benefit from early intervention and preschool special education.**
- **Technology can make early intervention and preschool special education settings less restrictive.**
- **Professionals must evaluate young children and identify technology to help them.**
- **The and IFSP and IEP are important tools for young children to get technology.**
- **Schools and other early intervention programs must provide technology that allows children to participate in program activities.**
- **Young children's needs should be reviewed each year, and new technology can be provided by the early intervention or preschool special education setting as needs change.**

Selection of Technology

"What technology is best for the young child ?"

The parents, early intervention, and public school personnel should remember there may be many devices or services which might help a child. Choosing technology best suited to meet the needs of a young child is a task that calls for careful consideration of many factors. These factors can be grouped into two areas: *personal factors* and *technology factors*. Each area is important and must be given careful thought before an IFSP or IEP decision about technology is agreed upon.

Personal Factors

"How are the child's skills an important personal factor?"

It is important to know what skills or abilities a child has before appropriate technology can be selected. A complete assessment of the child's skills across settings, such as recreation, toileting, and feeding, is preferred rather than looking at the child's skills in only one area. Some skills may not be seen except in a specific setting. If an assessment of the child's skills was not done in this setting, important skills might be overlooked. Some technologies require a lot of training, or certain physical and mental abilities, to learn to use them. For example, learning to use computers and other devices may call for special training provided by an early intervention professional. Other technologies are easy to use and can be learned in a short time. By completely and thoroughly looking at what the child can do, it is easier to choose a technology to fit the child's personal needs.

"How do the child's needs affect decision-making?"

Needs include any task or activity required to be more independent or successful. These might include things such as sitting without support, using one's

hands to do a task, dressing oneself, using a computer, or speaking words. It is important to know what a child's needs are because some technologies will call for certain skills or strengths that the child may or may not have. Meeting the young child's current and future needs should be primary issues in selecting technology.

"Do likes for technology affect decision-making?"

All children like some things and not others. When choosing technology these likes must be considered. A child may like a powered wheelchair rather than a manual wheelchair. The child may want a small device for talking rather than a large, difficult to carry device that causes people to stare at the child. Parents and professionals should understand the child may have likes that are different from those of other people on the IFSP or IEP committee. These likes need to be considered during the planning process.

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"Do sex and age play a role?"

The sex and the age of the child may affect decisions about needed technologies. For example, if the child is a boy, he probably would not want a device which talks by using a female voice; a girl would not want a device which talks by using a boy's voice. Technologies designed with young children in mind that resemble preschool toys would be more appropriate than technologies designed for older persons. While these seem to be obvious, they are often overlooked when selecting technology.

"Should the home and family activities be considered in the planning process?"

The parents and professionals must keep in mind the child's home setting and family activities when choosing technologies. If the child lives in a mobile home, a large, powered wheelchair might not be the best technology for the child if doors are not wide enough to allow the child to enter the home in the chair and participate in family activities. If the child wishes to attend church, consideration should be given to the demands that would be placed on others in church for the child to participate, modifications in the church building, and other considerations.

"How does getting to and from the early intervention or preschool special education setting affect technology choice?"

Since many young children must use public and school transportation, parents must consider whether technology chosen will allow the child to use this transportation. Some equipment, such as powered wheelchairs, need extra space, wheelchair locks, and ramps on buses and other vehicles. If the child has a device necessary to benefit from special education, the school must provide the necessary transportation. If changes are needed in buses or other vehicles to get the child to and from school, these changes must be made to meet the needs of the child. This would

include the use of lifts, ramps, railings, wheelchair locks, and special seats. It would also include removing bus seats to make space for children in wheelchairs.

"If the parent has goals for the child, is this important to consider in the IFSP and IEP process?"

Once a child's skills and needs have been identified, goals must be developed which recognize those skills and needs. Technologies cannot be selected to help a child attain his or her goals without understanding what devices and equipment are supposed to do. How the technology helps the child improve their living condition, their ability to complete important tasks, and their ability to be more independent are important considerations. If a device does not help the child to achieve their goals, then a different technology should be purchased. When parents and professionals are working on an IFSP committee, these goals *must be linked to the family's needs.* When working with an IEP committee, these goals *must be linked to the child's school aims.*

Technology Factors

"What if the parents are told there is only one kind of technology that will meet the child's needs?"

There are usually many types of technology designed to help children to overcome any needs they may have at home, school, and in other settings. There are many different types of devices which can help children to talk with others, feed themselves, or move around. For example, many varieties of wheelchairs have been designed to help children with physical disabilities get around. Before choosing any technology, parents and the IFSP or IEP committee should look at as many choices as possible before making a selection. The features of the device should be compared to the child's needs, skills, and the places in which the technology will be used. Parents of school-age children who are offered only one type of technology for their child may request a second opinion which *may* be paid for by the school, though they are not

required to do so. One option for a second opinion would be to contact the Special Education Resource Center at the Arkansas Easter Seal Society to request this service (see *Other Advocacy Contacts*, p. 44).

"What are the important features of the technology?"

Parents and early intervention and public school professionals should think about specific features of any technology before making a decision that it is best to meet the needs of the child. Following are several questions about these features that should be asked.

"Does it do what it's supposed to do?"

Generally, technologies do specific things for young children with disabilities. Parents and professionals should be sure the technology does the things *needed to benefit the child.* All persons should think about how the device helps the child's living condition, the child's ability to do important tasks, and the child's ability to be independent. If the device does not do these things, then a different technology should be considered.

Questions about dependability must also be asked. Does the device work the same way each time it is used? Does it only work like it's supposed to under some conditions? Are there special conditions that must be met for it to work? Some of these questions can be answered if parents and early intervention professionals have the child try the technology before it is purchased.

Some devices are easy to learn to use while others need much skill, physical ability, training, or practice. The parent and the IFSP or IEP committee should consider what is needed for a child to learn to use a device as much as possible.

"How much will it really cost?"

Some technologies must be put together for the child before use. For example, a computer system may need to have special wiring put into the home. A powered wheelchair may need special batteries not supplied by the company that sells the chair. Parents and professionals should ask about the costs of putting the technology together, additional parts needed in order for it to operate properly, and taking care of the technology. The device should also be able *to meet the needs of the child as he or she grows and progresses.*

Sometimes this information is not supplied by those persons who sell the technology. The cost of putting technology together, taking care of the technology, or customizing the technology is often added onto the cost of a technology *after* a commitment has been made to buy a device.

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Some types of technology, such as those needing batteries, involve expenses or operating costs. Parents and early intervention and public school professionals should be aware of these costs before buying any technology. Once an IEP committee agrees to buy a technology for a child, however, *it must pay for the costs of keeping the technology working.*

Once an IFSP committee agrees to purchase a device for a child, the costs of keeping the technology working may be assumed by the parents or other agencies and groups other than the school.

"Can it be moved easily?"

Since young children often need to use devices in many places, how easily the device can be moved and used in different places is important. Some devices may be large, heavy, or demand much space, and can only be used in a few places. Others can be taken anywhere.

"How long is it likely to last?"

Everyone likes to find good buys, but how long the device can be used is also an important concern. How easily a device can be broken and whether it can serve the young child with a disability as they grow and progress are important considerations when choosing technology. For example, a device which uses computer speech to talk for the child may be limited to the use of 10 words. When the child learns more words, it must be possible to modify the device to allow the use of more speech.

"Can the technology be used with other devices?"

Another important consideration when choosing some technologies is how easily they can be used with other devices. Wheelchairs, for example, are usually designed so that other devices can be easily added on; other types of technology may

not be changed so easily. Parents and others should give thought to both the child's present and future needs in looking at the ability of the technology to be used with other devices.

"Can it be tried?"

Parents and early intervention and public school professionals should be good consumers. If you are buying a car, you would shop around at car lots to get prices and bargain on the sale price with dealers. If a child needs a wheelchair, parents and others should be able to look at chairs sold by several dealers. All persons who are making decisions about what device a child will receive should be willing to shop around. Local companies which sell technology can bring samples of technology to the home or other early intervention setting and demonstrate how they work. Also, parents,

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children, and early intervention professionals can go to any of the technology access centers in the state under the Arkansas Technology Access Program (ARTAP) (see pp. 40-43) to try out various devices that might help young children with disabilities.

"How comfortable is it?"

Depending on the design of the technology, some devices may be uncomfortable to use while others can be used with great ease and comfort. Other technologies can only be used for a short time before the child will become tired. For example, some students with physical disabilities may not be able to lift their arms or use their fingers to operate some technologies without discomfort. Similarly, a wheelchair that is too small or too large will also affect the comfort of the child. If the chair must be operated by hand and the student does not have good arm and shoulder strength, the child will tire from use of the chair quickly. In any of these cases, careful thought must be given to the physical demands placed on the child to operate or use the technology. These concerns may be most appropriately evaluated by the therapist or technology expert who is working with the child. This person will then share their concerns and recommendations. By allowing the child to try the technology, information about the comfort of the technology may be obtained.

Whether the device is likely to cause physical harm, including bodily injury or infection, to the child is closely related to the concern of physical comfort. Parents, professionals, and others should give careful thought to how long the technology will be used and think about what bad effects, if any, it might have on the child.

"How easy is it to maintain the device from day to day?"

Some technologies will need regular repairs and/or cleaning. Others may need to be worked on and cleaned only after a certain amount of time has passed or when they don't work properly.

"How easy is it to get repaired?"

Many technologies are made or sold by firms found far from where the young child with a disability lives. When an early intervention program, school or family buys a device, the parents and early intervention and public school professionals *must* consider where a technology will be repaired. An effort should be made to find local shops or companies that can repair damaged devices bought from companies found elsewhere in the country. Thought must also be given to whether replacement parts are available, whether the manufacturer must make repairs, and the type of warranty.

"What happens when the device breaks?"

If a device is broken and must be repaired, it is important to consider what the child will use during the repair period. Parents and others should find out whether the child will have a backup device for use while the technology is being repaired. Some companies will provide a "loaner" to the child while his or her device is in the shop. This question should be asked before the purchase.

"How protected is the technology from theft and damage?"

Many technologies are expensive. Because of this cost, parents and professionals should think about how the child's technology will be safe from theft or damage. If the school, for example, buys the device, they sometimes want the technology to stay at the school and not be taken off school grounds. This is often a policy decision rather than a rule based on law. What parents and others should ask is whether the device is covered by a school insurance policy against theft and damage. More than 1/3 of the schools in Arkansas are covered under a state insurance plan that fails to cover the monetary value of equipment in the event of theft or loss. Once the device leaves the school grounds, parents may become responsible for the device if something should happen to it. Some schools in Arkansas, however, may have

insurance policies that protects technology which is purchased by the school and leaves the school grounds with the child. If something happens to the device, the insurance company would pay to have it fixed or buy a new one. Some early intervention programs serving children ages 0-2 years may have insurance policies that would cover devices which are sent home with young children, while others may not. Parents should ask before assuming the responsibility for the technology.

Parents who buy technology that is not needed for the child to benefit from early intervention should give thought to home owners or renters' insurance. Under these plans, a "rider" can be bought by the parents for a few dollars more which would pay for a new technology if the child's device is damaged or stolen.

"Where can I get information about selecting appropriate technology?"

There are several important places where parents and early intervention professionals can get information about appropriate technology. The Arkansas Technology Access Program (ARTAP) established a number of technology access centers around the state to show parents and professionals various types of devices. These centers also provide evaluations to determine what devices are best suited to meet the needs of young children with disabilities. Under the ARTAP system, a User-to-User network of parents and persons who use technology will be established to help people share information about technology and services. There will also be an Equipment Exchange Program that will have want ads for used equipment. Other types of information services will also be available. Listed in *Funding Sources* (pp. 40-43) is a description of ARTAP with addresses and telephone numbers.

Key Points:

- **In order to choose technology that is best for the young child, a number of factors must be considered. These factors include:**
  - **skills of the young child;**
  - **needs of the young child;**
  - **likes of the young child;**
  - **child's sex and age;**
  - **child's home and family activities;**
  - **child getting to and from the preschool or early intervention setting;**
  - **parent's goals for the child;**
  - **range of technologies available;**
  - **features of the technology;**
  - **purpose of the technology;**
  - **real cost of the technology;**
  - **ease with which technology can be moved;**
  - **length of time technology will last;**
  - **usefulness of the technology with other devices;**
  - **ability of child to try the technology;**
  - **comfort of the technology;**
  - **ease with which technology can be maintained;**
  - **ease with which the technology can be repaired;**
  - **availability of a backup device during repair period; and**
  - **protection from theft and damage.**

Funding for Technology

"Who pays for the technology that the young child needs?"

Since early intervention programs and public schools have a limited amount of money, it is easy to understand why who is paying for technology is important. Professionals are faced with great responsibilities about how money is to be spent for children. If a child is receiving special education services from the public school, *the school must provide the technology* that is recommended by the IEP committee for the student to gain from these services. For younger children who are to receive technology that is listed in the child's IFSP, *the persons or groups responsible for purchasing and maintaining the technology must also be listed on the IFSP.* Parents or others may have to assume all or some of this responsibility.

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"What if the school doesn't want to pay for the technology the child needs?"

If the early intervention program or public school will not buy technology to meet the needs of the child, parents should consider getting an advocate to help. An advocate is a person who helps people get services they need. One agency that has been quite helpful to parents in Arkansas is Advocacy Services, Inc. For more information about advocacy strategies and the appeal process, see *Advocacy for Technology* (pp. 28-34) and *Other Advocacy Contacts* (pp. 44-45).

For school-age children with disabilities who are not receiving preschool special education services, other options are available to parents. Under Section 504, public schools are required to provide children with disabilities with a free and appropriate public education. They are also required under this law to provide an equal opportunity to participate. For example, a child who needs a wheelchair lift on a school bus to get to school should be provided with this technology. If a school refused to buy a lift to help a child get to and from school to receive a free and appropriate public education, a Section 504 complaint may be filed. Similarly, younger children with disabilities who are not receiving early intervention but whose parents wish for them to participate in programs that are receiving federal funding must also be provided with an equal opportunity to participate. This would include installing ramps into buildings and modifying bathrooms to allow young children in wheelchairs access. If these programs fail to to provide the opportunity to participate, a 504 complaint may be filed. Advocacy Services, Inc. can assist in the filing of this complaint (see *Advocacy for Technology*, pp. 29-30)

"Who can help pay for technology?"

In cases where the child does not need to receive early intervention or preschool special education services, but needs a special device, other choices for paying for the technology with the early intervention program or school system have

to be considered. Civic clubs, churches, businesses, and other groups are all possible places to get help with paying for technology. Also, parents might think about working with a third party, such as an insurance company, or private agency to get money to buy the technology. Many insurance companies will pay for certain types of devices needed by young children who are covered under the policies. Private agencies and organizations such as the Association for Hearing Impaired Children and the Spina Bifida Association may also assist families in buying needed technology.

One state agency which has been very helpful in getting technology for students less than 18 years of age is Children's Medical Services (CMS). It assists children who are very ill or who have physical disabilities and their families to pay for expensive technologies and services. One funding source CMS uses to pay for technology is the Medicaid program. If parents wish to apply for or get information about Medicaid, this may be done at any local County Human Services Office.

Another program which is being used by Children's Medical Services and parents across the state to get technology for young children who do not qualify for Medicaid is the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982 (TEFRA). This program is for people who are not able to get help under Supplemental Security Income (SSI). TEFRA is a very important program which parents can use to get needed technology for their children. For more information about TEFRA and other funding sources, see *Funding Sources* (pp. 35-43).

"What if we want to buy the technology ourselves?"

If parents are thinking about buying needed technology for the child, they may want to ask the company selling the technology about making payments over time. Early intervention professionals may help parents contact banks and other lending places in the area. In Little Rock, for example, there are several places that will finance technology with a reasonable down payment from the family.

Key Points:

- **Schools must pay for technology which help special education students meet education goals.**
- **Parents can appeal a decision of the IEP committee.**
- **Insurance and private organizations can help parents to pay for devices.**
- **Medicaid and TEFRA are important sources for getting technology for students.**
- **Parents may sometimes pay for technology by making time payments.**

Parent and Child Rights

"What rights do parents and young children have?"

Parents and young children have many rights that have been set up by the legal system, and federal and state laws. These rights include:

- **The right to information.** Parents and young children have a right to be given information about technology and early intervention services in the state, and the right to get information.

- **The right to advocacy.** Parents and young children have the right to expect agencies and early intervention programs to help them get technology for children with disabilities. They also have the right to do all they can to get needed devices.

- **The right to honest answers.** Parents and young children have the right to get honest answers about the child's technology needs from early intervention professionals. This includes information about the results of evaluations, recommendations made by professionals following these evaluations, and other information about the child's technology needs.

- **The right to independence for the parent and the child.** Technology is a way to secure more independence by making young children less dependent on other people. The right to independence for children with disabilities can be seen in no less than 35 state and federal laws. Independence should be the cornerstone for decisions regarding technology for the child.

- **The right to due process.** This includes the right to receive notice about decisions made about the child's technology, the right to a hearing to protest these decisions, the right to be represented by an advocate in that process, and the right to appeal the decisions of the hearing.

- **The right to disagree with professionals.** Since parents and young children have the right to be involved in decisions made about the child's technology needs,

they also have a right to disagree with decisions they feel are not in the best interests of the child. Sometimes misunderstandings will occur when parents disagree with professionals. This problem can be avoided often if both parents and professionals keep their discussions on the issues of technology needed by the child, and not allow feelings to enter into the discussions. However, parents and professionals should remember that the child's needs are most important. Parents and children should not be afraid to let professionals know if they disagree with them! Opinions can be presented in a way that will not cause hurt feelings. Ways to do this are presented in the following section called *Advocacy for Technology*.

- **The right to have feelings.** All parents and young children have a right to feelings about technology that they would like to use. We all have choices for buying goods and services. Technology is no different.

Key Points:

- **Parents and young children have the right to information that is specific to the child's needs.**
- **Parents and young children have the right to expect help from early intervention programs and agencies.**
- **Children with disabilities have the right to get needed technology.**
- **Parents and young children have the right to honest answers from others about the child's technology needs.**
- **Young children have the right to be as independent as possible.**
- **Parents and young children have the right to due process.**
- **Parents and young children have the right to their own opinions and to disagree with others.**

Advocacy for Technology

"What is advocacy?"

Advocacy is a way of helping young children with disabilities. It is things parents can do to protect the child's rights. It can also improve the services the child can get in the community. Advocacy is important in working with early intervention programs and public schools because it can help the child get the technology he or she needs. Advocacy includes such activities as attending meetings and speaking up for the rights of the child, talking with an owner of a building that does not have a ramp for persons with wheelchairs about providing one, and speaking to other parents who have children with disabilities about their rights.

"How do the parents and early intervention and public school professionals let others know about the child's needs?"

The parents and professionals must explain the needs of the child. Whether it is a need for talking to others, dressing, or playing with toys, the need must be clearly stated. It is also important to let others know how the child feels about the needs and who is affected by the needs. Parents and professionals should know whether the child's needs are ongoing, or whether they occur only at some points in time, as this might suggest a need for different types of technology. Professionals should help parents decide what technology services that are needed in the areas of education, medical care, transportation, and other areas. Once agreement is reached regarding what types of services are needed for the child, agencies or groups that can provide the needed services should be identified. Professionals and parents should then discuss what plan of action is needed to get these services for the child. All this information should be written down and shared with early intervention and preschool special education professionals and others when decisions are being made about technology.

"How do I get information?"

Parents can help early intervention and public school professionals to make decisions about the child's technology needs in a number of ways. If the child has received services from any agency including the school, parents may ask to look at their child's case file and get important information. Under the *Family Educational and Privacy Act of 1974*, parents have the right to ask for and get copies of their children's records. Educational records are any records kept by the program or their agent about a child. However, parents may be requested to pay for the cost of having these copies made and they may not get them immediately. Also, under Public Law 94-142 and Section 504, schools must allow parents to get information about their children. These laws apply to all records kept on children including records kept on a computer. If the parents are denied records which are requested, they have the right to a hearing to obtain needed records.

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It is important to know something about the laws which can affect whether or not technology can be provided to the child. Few people know all the laws which are important for the parents and a young child with a disability. However, it is important to know where to get this information. To find out about rights, parents should contact:

Advocacy Services, Inc.
1120 Marshall, Suite 311
Little Rock, AR 72202
☎ 1-(800) 482-1174 or (501) 371-2171

"Is it important to keep records of people and their roles in decision-making?"

Parents and early intervention and public school professionals should also try to get to know the people who make decisions about the technology a child may receive. Names, addresses, phone numbers, and other information about the people involved are *important* since many persons may need to be contacted to get needed technology.

"What skills are important when speaking with professionals?"

Talking with professionals is very important to get needed services for young children with disabilities. To be successful in talking to professionals, parents and early intervention and public school professionals should look at their communication skills. To communicate well with others requires the use of a number of skills. These skills include keeping eye contact with the person being spoken to, keeping good body posture when speaking, using facial expressions to make needs known, using hand and body gestures when this is proper, and controlling the tone of voice while speaking. It is also important to express an understanding of things which professionals say and to ask questions. These important skills tell the person with whom a person is speaking that they are prepared, that they are serious, and that they are listening to what is being said. If it is felt there are problems in any of these areas, parents and early intervention

professionals should make an effort to develop these skills. Advocacy Services, Inc. is an important agency that can help people develop these skills.

"What if I don't understand the questions?"

Sometimes words which are difficult to understand are used when professionals are speaking to people. When this happens, professionals should be asked to explain the meaning of the words they are using. It is not reasonable for anyone to expect all persons to know all words used by professionals, so persons should not be afraid to say "I don't know,""I don't understand," or "Can you tell me what you mean by ____?"

"What about 'traps' in communication?"

Parents and early intervention and public school professionals should not get trapped into saying things such as "If you don't _____, then I'll have to _____" People do not like being told that they "have to do something", or that they "take something or leave it." Generally, these types of statements make the task of getting technology for the child more difficult. If such a thing is said to a person, they should ask the professional what other things were considered, suggest other things that can be done, and ask if there are other things which can be done.

"Who is served by the agency or school?"

Parents and early intervention and public school professionals should also know whether the services offered by the early intervention program or agency are offered to everyone or only to certain kinds of people. If the child does not meet the criteria to receive services by the program or agency, an effort should be made to find out what can be done for the child to get services. Parents and early intervention and public school professionals should ask what kinds of information they need to be considered for services by the agency, as well as to ask about how to apply for services.

Finally, information about the appeal process if they are turned down for services should be obtained.

"Is it important to keep records about the things that I do to help the child get the technology that he or she needs?"

When making telephone calls to persons working at agencies, parents and early intervention and public school professionals should make notes of names, telephone numbers, and information given by the persons with whom they speak. Letters which are written and received as well as records that are obtained can be very important. These notes, letters, and records should be kept in a folder for later use. A written statement of any actions taken by agencies or programs that affect the child should be requested. A written statement of when actions or services are to begin is also helpful and should be obtained.

"Is follow-up important to see that the child gets his or her technology?"

Follow-up is important to see that the needed services are being given. Parents and early intervention professionals should look at what technology and services the agency or program is giving to the child and how often the services are provided. If the child has other needs, the parents and early intervention and public school professionals can use their advocacy skills to try and get the technology and services needed for the child.

"What if the IFSP or IEP committee decides not to provide technology that I feel would help the child to benefit from early intervention?"

Parents have the right to appeal the decision of the IEP committee if the needed technology is not provided to the child. The appeal, or due process hearing, begins when parents or school ask for a hearing. If parents of a school-age child ask for a

hearing, the school will help the parents to write the hearing request. Once the appeal is written, the school will then file the appeal with the Arkansas State Department of Education. A date will be set for the hearing and the parents will be informed in writing of the meeting date and time.

Within 7 days of filing the appeal, a prehearing conference will be set up. This is a meeting between the school and the parents along with a person who helps to solve these kinds of problems. The meeting is to help find an answer to the problem which the parents have in getting technology for the child. If an answer is agreed on by the parents and the school, this is the end of the appeal. However, if no answers are found, or if only a part of the problem is solved, the appeal is then taken before an "impartial" hearing officer. The hearing officer is a trained person to whom the appeal is presented. He or she will make a decision based on the facts and the law. Being impartial means that the hearing officer cannot be an employee of the school or an agency which is providing educational services to the child.

The hearing officer will review all the facts and information that is presented at the hearing and make a decision in writing which is then shared with parents and the school. If the parents are not happy with the decision made by the hearing officer, they have the right to file a legal action against the school in court. This can be a very costly process for parents, but it is one which may sometimes have to be considered.

For younger children ages 0-2 years, a similar process as that described above is being considered for approval by persons who are developing the guidelines for early intervention services in Arkansas. These guidelines will be in place by 1991.

Key Points:

- **Advocacy helps to protect a child's rights and get needed technology.**
- **Parents and professionals can help others make decisions about technology by getting as much information about a child as possible.**
- **Communication skills are important when talking with professionals.**
- **Records of things that are done to get technology should be kept.**
- **Parents and professionals should ask questions of others when they don't understand what has been said.**
- **Parents and professionals can avoid traps in talking with others.**
- **Follow-up is important.**
- **Parents can appeal the decision of the IFSP or IEP committee.**

Funding Sources

There is no area more important to most parents of young children who have disabilities and early intervention professionals working with these children than funding for devices. If the technology is to help a child benefit from early intervention provided by the schools, the schools should provide the technology. If the technology is to help a child benefit from early intervention provided by some agency or program other than the public schools, then different funding sources may have to be considered. This is true also for school-age children who have technology needs that cannot be shown to be related to their educational needs in the public school setting. In these cases, parents who cannot afford to pay for the technology should consider other ways to pay for it. Following is a description of several funding alternatives.

Private Insurance

Many families have health insurance policies which cover certain types of devices that are needed by young children with disabilities. In some instances, the child is the beneficiary of the parents' policy purchased through their employer. A standard health insurance coverage plan states what types of services will be paid by the company. Most coverage includes a deductible amount of costs that must be paid by the family before the insurance company will pay a percentage of the remaining costs. A typical policy covers 80% of the costs of physician and related services.

It is unlikely that the policy will list such services as rehabilitation engineering, or assistive devices. However, parents may find listed coverage for physical and occupational therapy, and therapeutic aids that are prescribed by a physician. In most instances, there is a great deal of flexibility allowed to the insurance company to cover technology that might be needed for the child. Parents who who do not have insurance and who are interested in getting information about what companies provide coverage

that might help the parents' child get needed technology should contact local companies. They should ask whether devices are covered under the policies that are offered by the company.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act Amendments of 1986 (P.L. 99-457; P.L. 94-142)

Under this legislation, school systems must provide an individualized education plan (IEP) to all school-age children ages 3-21 who require special education services. A team of persons—parents, professionals, and the child (when proper)—design the IEP. Technology may be supplied as a "related service" in the IEP. In Arkansas, there are many differences across school systems in funding technology as a related service. The rule of thumb, however, is that if the technology is identified as "specialized equipment" which is *necessary for the student to benefit from special education*, then the school has a responsibility for providing the technology. For younger children ages 0-2 years, an Individualized Family Intervention Plan (IFSP) must be provided to children in need of early intervention services. Technology may be provided as a special instructional strategy, or through speech pathology, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and health services, all of which are appropriate early intervention services.

If you have questions regarding the responsibility of the child's school in the provision of technology, parents should contact the Special Education Supervisor or Superintendent for the school district.

To get information about P.L. 94-142 at the state level, parents should call the Arkansas State Department of Education:

☎ 1-(800) 482-5859 or (501) 682-4221

To get information about P.L. 99-457 at the state level, parents should call the Arkansas Division of Developmental Disabilities Services:

☎ 1-800-482-5850 or (501) 682-8667

The Handicapped Children's Act of 1973, Act 102

This state law guarantees the rights of all children with disabilities in Arkansas to a free and appropriate public education. P.L. 94-142, which was passed two years later, made this education a federally guaranteed right.

To get information about Act 102, parents may contact their local Special Education Supervisor, or call:

☎ 1-(800) 482-5850 or (501) 682-4227

The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Amendments of 1987 (P.L. 100-146)

This legislation was enacted to provide states with money to plan and carry on activities for children that lead to a greater ability to live and work in the community. Money under this act may be used for direct services which includes rehabilitation technology services. Through the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), some funds are available through Medicaid waivers for therapy-related services for children of *all* ages who are eligible for Medicaid who are currently receiving services. The Division actively helps students to get needed technology through cooperative agreements with other agencies. Funding for therapeutic technology is provided directly to young students ages 0-5 years who receive help from DDS programs.

To obtain information about DDS, parents may contact their local DDS office or at the state level they may call:

☎ 1-800-482-5850 or (501) 682-8665.

Social Security Act, Budget Reconciliation Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-509)

This act includes several programs that provide medical and related services including technology to a variety of persons. These programs include the following.

Medicaid (Title XIX). This program provides persons with chronic disabilities, who meet the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) test of disability, with medical help. In order for a device to be funded under Medicaid, it must fit the definition of a *prosthetic device*. This means replacement, corrective, or supportive devices prescribed by a physician or other licensed person. In Arkansas, devices covered under Medicaid include canes, crutches, walkers, manual wheelchairs, manual hospital beds, and side rails for beds. Hearing aids and eyeglasses are covered up until age 21.

To obtain information about Medicaid, parents may contact their local DHS County Services Office, or call:

☎ 1-800-482-8988 or (501) 682-8233

Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded (ICF/MR). Recent regulations under this section will provide a potential source of funding for assistive technology services for children *in active treatment* (who live in an ICF/MR). An interdisciplinary team determines what is necessary for active treatment for each child in an ICF/MR. Active treatment could include mechanical supports to achieve positioning, toilet and bathing facilities, communication aids, and other devices.

To obtain information about ICF/MR, parents may call their local DDS office, or call:

☎ 1-800-482-5850 or (501) 682-8667

Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982, Section 134 (TEFRA)

This Act permits all children in the state who are less than 18 years of age who are at risk for long-term care placement who qualify to receive technology benefits. Students must have a disability acording to SSI definition and their resources must not exceed $2,000. The child's income must be less than $30. TEFRA is specifically designed to allow parents to keep a child at home as opposed to sending the child to a nursing home or other type of institution. Eligibility for TEFRA will depend upon one of the following:

(1) A plan of care prescribed by a physician requiring that the student get daily use of a certain technology or service;

(2) That special technology-related medical care is needed if the student is at risk for institutionalization;

(3) That parents must receive special training to implement the medical portion of the plan for the student; or

(4) That the student would be unable to do activities of daily living proper for their age without the help of a care giver or related technology.

To obtain information about TEFRA, parents should call:

☎ 1-800-482-5850 or (501) 682-8207

Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1990 (P. L. 101-239)

Among the nine services that Arkansas is required to provide to persons under the age of 21 receiving Medicaid benefits is the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) program. Beginning April 1, 1990, Arkansas will be required to treat *any physical or mental problem* identified during EPSDT screenings and assessments. These treatments must be coverable under federal Medicaid law, but do not have to be contained in the Arkansas Medicaid plan. The law suggests that physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language/audiology services, and

specific assistive devices may now be provided through EPSDT.

To obtain information about EPSDT, parents should contact their local DHS office or call:

☎ 1-800-482-1141 or (501) 682-8297

Arkansas Technology Access Program (ARTAP)

ARTAP is designed to provide a range of technology services to children with disabilities. To receive information about ARTAP and the various services which are offered by contacting any of the following.

Arkansas Technology Information System (ARTIS)

This is a consumer-responsive statewide system of information, storage, and retrieval enabling all parents and students to get information about assistive devices and services. This system has a number of important goals which include making information available to all persons regarding technology and services, training, marketing the system on a statewide basis, improving cooperation among agencies, developing a User-to-User network, creating a system of regional technology specialists to act as resource persons in local communities, and creating an equipment exchange program of used assistive devices. ARTIS will use a publicly distributed database accessible to all persons. The system will output information in print, large print, Braille, and auditorily.

ARTIS may be contacted by calling or writing the center at:

ARTIS
2201 Brookwood
Little Rock, AR 72203
☎ 1- (800) 828-2799 or (501) 371-3566

Technology Access Centers (TACS)

Five TACs have been developed, each providing specialized technology-related services in one of the following areas: visual impairments, hearing impairments, cognitive and language development, communication, and independent living. The TACs serve persons *of all ages* and *all disabilities*. TACs are designed to freely provide information and hands-on demonstration about technology devices and approaches to children, parents, employers, business, and the general public. The TACs also provide and participate in training activities concerning technology and awareness and provide technical assistance to consumers, professionals, and policy-makers. Additionally, TACs provide formal evaluations/assessments and other services, such as therapy and device construction, for a fee. Each TAC maintains a record on a database of the technology information resources, and this database is shared with the ARTIS, other TACs, and persons concerned with technology access.

Communication and Learning Technology Access Center. Two TACs in Communication and Learning Technology have been set up at the Arkansas Easter Seal Society in Little Rock. The Communication TAC focuses on augmentative communication and related types of technologies for non-speaking persons, as well as access to computer equipment. The Learning TAC serves persons having learning disabilities, head injuries, and other types of learning and language problems. It will provide information, demonstrations, and training on software for word processing, mathematics, and related technologies.

To get information about this TAC, parents should write or call:

Communication and Learning Technology Access Center
Arkansas Easter Seal Society
P. O. Box 5148
Little Rock, AR 72225
☎ (501) 663-8331

Assistive Listening Devices Center. The TAC for Deaf and Hearing Impaired was awarded to the Arkansas Association for Hearing Impaired Children (AAHIC). This TAC provides information, hands-on experiences, training, and assessments in assistive devices for persons with hearing impairments. Examples of such technologies include signalling systems, telephone amplifiers, hearing aids, amplification systems, speech training aids, manual sign training computer programs, and telecaption equipment.

To get information about this TAC, parents should write or call:

Assistive Listening Devices Center
Audiology and Speech Pathology, Room 105
University of Arkansas at Little Rock
2801 South University
Little Rock, AR 72204
☎ (501) 569-3155

Technology Center for Independence. The TAC in Independent Living was awarded to Life Styles of Fayetteville. This TAC focuses on technologies that assist *anyone with a disability* to function more successfully in the community. It provides information, hands-on experiences, training, and assessments on assistive devices concerned with home management, personal care, home modifications, architectural modifications, home health, and recreation.

To get information about this TAC, parents should write or call call:

Technology Center for Independence (TCI)
Life Styles
P. O. Box 1114
Fayetteville, AR 72702
☎ (501) 521-8476

Technology Access Center - Visual Impairments. The TAC for Visual Impairments reflects the coordinated efforts of agencies serving persons with visual impairments and blindness. The lead agency is Lions' World Services for the Blind in Little Rock. This TAC provides information, hands-on experiences, training, and assessments on assistive technologies for persons with visual impairments. Examples of these technologies include auditory and tactile time and temperature aids, talking file storage, electronic sensing devices, navigation aids, and tactile Braillers.

To get information about this TAC, parents should write or call:

Visually Impaired Technology Access Center (VITAC)
Lions' World Services for the Blind
2811 Fair Park Blvd.
Little Rock, AR 72204
☎ (501) 664-7100

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Other Advocacy Contacts

Arkansas Association for Hearing Impaired Students
P.O. Box 7630
Little Rock, AR 72217
☎ (501) 661-1444

Arkansas Association for Visually Impaired Students and Youth
P.O. Box 34021
Little Rock, AR 72201
☎ (501) 835-8548

Arkansas Association for the Deaf
9005 Lew Drive
Little Rock, AR 72209
☎ (501) 225-3949

Arkansas Easter Seal Society
P.O. Box 5418
Little Rock, AR 72225
☎ (501) 663-8331

Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind
411 Victory Street
Little Rock, AR 72203
☎ 1-(800) 482-5850, Ext. 2587 or (501) 371-2587

Arkansas Disability Coalition
10002 West Markham, Suite B7
Little Rock, AR 72205
☎ (501) 221-1330

Arkansas Occupational Therapy Association
P.O. Box 22082
Little Rock, AR 72221

Arkansas Special Education Resource Center
1405 North Pierce, Suite 101
Little Rock, AR 72202
☎ (501) 663-3835

Arkansas Speech and Hearing Association
111 Center Street, Suite 1400
Little Rock, AR 72201
☎ (501) 374-7701

Association for Retarded Citizens/Arkansas
Union Station Square, Suite 412
Little Rock, AR 72201
☎ (501) 375-4464

CornerStone Project
4800 West 26th Street
Little Rock, AR 72204
☎ 1-800-359-5541 or (501) 664-0963

Early Intervention Case Management Program
1120 Marsall Street, Suite 306
Little Rock, AR 72202
☎ 1-(800)-752-2160 or (501) 371-1019

FOCUS, Inc.
2917 King Street, Suite C
Jonesboro, AR 72401
☎ (501) 935-2750

Independent Case Management
5917 "H" Street
Little Rock, AR 72205
☎ (501) 664-7254

National Federation for the Blind/Ark. Chapter
508 South Valentine
Little Rock, AR 72205
☎ (501) 666-2469

Northwest Arkansas Family Support Group
P.O. Box 697
Bentonville, AR 72712
☎ (501) 273-0338

Physical Therapy Association of Arkansas
1 Spring, #330
Little Rock, AR 72201
☎ (501) 378-7508

Post-Polio Support Group/SAILS Project
827 3rd Street
Hot Springs, AR 71913
☎ (501) 624-7710

Spina Bifida Association of Arkansas
2000 Aldersgate Road
Little Rock, AR 72205
☎ (501) 224-2300

Unified Community Resource Council
Arkansas Division of Volunteerism
Donaghey Plaza South
P.O. Box 1437
Little Rock, AR 72203
☎ 1-(800) 482-5850, Ext. 27540 or
(501) 628-7540

United Cerebral Palsy
10400 West 36th
Little Rock, AR 72205
☎ (501) 224-6067

Frequently Called Numbers

Agency/Group	Number

Checklist of Questions to Ask About Technology

If the item has been considered, place a check (√) *mark.*

____ **What are the child's needs?**

____ **What are the child's (or parents') preferences for technology?**

____ **Is the device what a boy or girl would use?**

____ **Is the technology right for the child's age?**

____ **Have the child's home and family activities been considered?**

____ **What are the transportation needs for the child?**

____ **Will the school pay for the technology my child needs?**

____ **Am I able to pay for the device that the child needs?**

____ **Can the device help the child and/or the family meet their goals?**

____ **How many different types of devices can meet the child's needs?**

____ **Does the technology do what it is supposed to do?**

____ **How much will the device really cost?**

____ **Can the child comfortably operate the technology?**

____ **Is the device dependable?**

____ **Can the technology be moved easily?**

____ **How long is the device likely to last?**

____ **Can the technology be used with other devices?**

____ **Will the child be able to try the device before it is bought?**

____ **How easy is it to take care of the technology from day to day?**

____ **How secure is the device?**

____ **How easy is it to learn to use the technology?**

____ **How easy is the technology to put together?**

____ **How easy is it to get the technology repaired?**

Checklist for Advocacy Activities

If the item has been considered, place a check (√) *mark.*

Understanding the Problem

____ **What are the needs that the child has because of the disability?**

____ **How does the child feel about the needs?**

____ **Is the need one that has been present for a long time? Or is the need one which only occurs at certain times?**

____ **What are solutions to address the need? What agencies or people might help address the needs?**

____ **What has been already been done to meet the child's needs?**

____ **What has the school or program done to help meet the child's needs?**

Gathering Information

____ **Have I called people in the community to find out who provides services that the child needs?**

____ **Do I have copies of documents from community agencies that discuss the child's rights and services provided?**

____ **Do I have information about the chain of command in community agencies that might help the child?**

____ **Do I have information about the laws that affect the child?**

____ **Do I have copies of tests and reports about the child?**

____ **Have I reviewed the child's case files?**

____ **Have I kept notes of people's names and what they have told me?**

Putting Suggestions into Action

____ **Have I written down how to get needed technology for the child?**

____ **Do my communication skills need to be improved? These include:**

- **keeping eye contact with people when talking to them;**
- **keeping good body posture when talking with people;**
- **using facial and body expressions when talking with people;**
- **controlling the tone of my voice when talking with people;**
- **letting people know that I understand what they are saying; and**
- **asking questions.**

Taking Action

____ **Have I suggested to professionals that the meeting to discuss the child's technology needs take place in the home?**

____ **Have I suggested that the meeting to discuss the child's technology needs take place in a church, library, or public building?**

____ **Have I made myself familiar with the meeting place?**

____ **Can I get to the meeting place early?**

____ **Have I looked at the seating arrangements for the meeting?**

____ **Do I know who will be at the meeting and what their roles are?**

____ **Will other family members or friends be with me at the meeting?**

____ **Have I made a list of things to discuss with the people present at the meeting? Are the most difficult issues listed first or last?**

____ **Have the people at the meeting agreed on the meeting length?**

____ **If I become upset at the meeting, will I be able to ask for more information or ask for a short break?**

____ **If words are used at the meeting that I don't understand, will I be able to ask people to explain what they mean?**

____ **Can I keep from telling people that they have to do something?**

Notes

The following pages are provided to you to make notes about your efforts to get assistive technology for the child.

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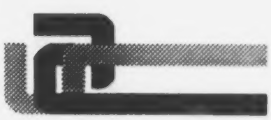

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